

General Picture of English Language Teaching Programs and Students in Turkey

Türkiye'deki İngilizce Öğretmenliği Programlarının ve Öğrencilerinin Genel Görünümü

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ABSTRACT

English language teaching (henceforth ELT) has always been criticized due to the performance of Turkey in global English proficiency indices and students' lack of speaking ability. Despite several attempts to change language teaching programs, it cannot be claimed that the situation has transformed. ELT programs and students studying in these programs as one of the major elements of language teaching and learning issues in the country have been investigated in this study. The statistics regarding ELT programs and ELT students between the years 2016 and 2019 have been taken from YÖK Atlas, an online platform launched by the Council of Higher Education. The statistical data taken from this platform were analyzed, taking students' gender, educational background, university preferences, and foreign language test mean scores as well as ELT programs' academic staff, performance in exchange programs, and students' program preference statistics into account. The statistics indicated the dominance of female students and relatively low English proficiency of the students in ELT programs. Assistant professors were found to be the leading academic staff in these programs. Moreover, ELT students' preferences with regard to geographical proximity and availability of student exchange programs have been provided in the findings. Finally, some potential future research topics have been suggested.

Keywords: English Language Teaching, Turkey, English proficiency, University preference factors, ELT statistics

ÖZ

İngilizce dil öğretimi, Türkiye'nin küresel İngilizce yeterlilik endekslerindeki performansı ve öğrencilerin konuşma becerisi eksikliği nedeniyle her zaman eleştirilmiştir. Dil öğretim programlarını değiştirmek için yapılan çeşitli girişimlere rağmen, durumun değiştiği iddia edilemez. Bu çalışmada, ülkemizde dil öğretimi ve öğrenimi konusunun en önemli unsurlarından biri olan İngilizce öğretmenliği programları ve bu programlarda okuyan öğrenciler araştırılmıştır. 2016-2019 yılları arasında İngilizce öğretmenliği programlarına ve öğrencilerine ilişkin istatistikler, Yükseköğretim Kurulu tarafından başlatılan çevrimiçi bir platform olan YÖK Atlas'tan alınmıştır. Bu platformdan alınan istatistik veriler, öğrencilerin cinsiyeti, eğitim geçmişleri, üniversite tercihleri, yabancı dil testi ortalama skorları ile birlikte İngilizce öğretmenliği programlarının akademik kadrosu, değişim programları performansı ve öğrencilerin programları tercih istatistikleri alınarak analiz edilmiştir. İstatistikler, kız öğrencilerin bu programdaki sayıca üstünlüğünü ve öğrencilerin nispeten düşük İngilizce yeterliliğini göstermiştir. Doktor öğretim üyesi pozisyonu bu programlarda sayıca önde gelen akademik personel olarak bulunmuştur. Ayrıca bulgularda İngilizce öğretmenliği öğrencilerinin üniversite tercihlerinde coğrafi yakınlık ve öğrenci değişim programlarının mevcudiyeti ile ilgili tercihleri sunulmuştur. Son olarak, gelecekteki bazı potansiyel araştırma konuları önerilmiştir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: İngilizce öğretmenliği, Türkiye, İngilizce yeterliliği, Üniversite tercih faktörleri, İngilizce öğretmenliği istatistikleri

Asmalı M., (2020). General picture of english language teaching programs and students in Turkey. *Journal of Higher Education and Science/Yükseköğretim ve Bilim Dergisi*, 10(2), 264-275. <https://doi.org/10.5961/jhes.2020.388>

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Received/Geliş Tarihi : 24.03.2020

Accepted/Kabul Tarihi : 18.05.2020

INTRODUCTION

The spread of English as a global language, especially among non-native speakers, has affected foreign language policies of many countries (Tollefson, 2002). Despite the domination of approaches of mainstream educational research on it previously, ELT has come into prominence as a new and independent field of study since the beginning of the 21st century (Öztürk & Aydın, 2018). With the change in society and the explosion of digital technologies employed in the classrooms, foreign language teaching and learning have turned into an activity and process requiring more than just students' reciting phrases and regurgitating the information in the examinations.

Turkey, as a candidate to be a full member of the European Union, has had some attempts to keep pace with the constantly changing nature of ELT. However, despite these attempts, statistics have shown that Turkey's performance in international English proficiency indices steadily falls under the category of 'very low proficiency', moving it to the 79th position among 100 countries (Education First [EF], 2019). The discontent with the results of current ELT from primary to tertiary education levels (Çelebi, 2019) stems from several reasons and requires some radical changes. Studies have reported several reasons why Turkish students from various age groups are not capable of learning English, such as their parents' lack of knowledge in English, ethnocentric thoughts, blaming sociocultural, educational, and economic factors (Yurtsever Bodur & Arıca, 2017), grammar-based education, limited practice, differences between English and Turkish, and speaking anxiety (Coşkun, 2016). Criticism goes beyond and involves incompetence of English teachers, following traditional language teaching methodologies, students' lack of motivation and interest, scarcity of resources and equipment, and inadequacy of English classes and teachers (Çelebi, 2019; Erarslan, 2019).

Not surprisingly, English language teacher education programs at universities get their shares from criticism as well due to the failure in fulfilling their role to make the country reach the target level in English language competence (Öztürk & Aydın, 2018). Apart from the consensus reached on lack of success in providing future language teachers with the 21st century skills, lack of feedback on tasks and limited school practice experience, theory-based education, lack of training for higher technology literacy, using outdated teaching techniques, and prospective teachers' focus on passing national examinations to work for the government are among the major criticisms for ELT programs in Turkey (Öztürk & Aydın, 2018).

In order to overcome problems faced in ELT programs, some significant steps have been taken. The changes in 1998, 2006, and finally in 2018 have attempted to address the issue by bringing about some changes. Several studies have also been published in the field of ELT. They provided a historical overview of ELT programs in Turkey (Köksal & Ulum, 2018; Nergis, 2011; Ulum, 2015), examined the impact of some classes (Uzun, 2016), evaluated the ELT program (Coşkun, 2010; Karakaş,

2012; Yavuz & Topkaya Zehir, 2013), and attempted to reveal the reasons of failure and suggested policy reforms (Öztürk & Aydın, 2018).

Although several aspects related to ELT programs have been investigated from different angles so far, the profile of the students and programs at universities involving the nationwide statistics has been neglected in this respect. Unlike other studies based on pure evaluation of the ELT program or historical descriptions of it in Turkey, this study attempts to follow a unique way by providing retrospective statistics regarding ELT programs offered at all universities in Turkey and students studying in these programs. A comprehensive description of ELT programs would be significant for the academic staff, students, and program coordinators since these statistics clearly exhibit the current condition of these programs. Weaknesses and strengths of the ELT programs reflected through statistics would be helpful for the stakeholders to make the right decisions to improve the current conditions of the program. Combined retrospective statistics regarding ELT students would help academics and researchers develop a projection concerning the future potential ELT students' demographic features, preferences, educational background, and proficiency. Considering the potential significance of the findings and the gap in the related literature, this study aims to provide a detailed picture of ELT students and the ELT programs at universities in Turkey by addressing the following issues using the statistics provided by YÖK Atlas (<https://yokatlas.yok.gov.tr/>), a website launched by Council of Higher Education (CoHE) for the use of students to guide them for their university and program choices.

1. The profile of the ELT students
 - 1.1. Gender distribution of the ELT students studying in Turkey between 2016 and 2019
 - 1.2. Educational background of the ELT students studying in Turkey in 2019
 - 1.3. Alternative programs preferred by the ELT students in 2019
 - 1.4. ELT students' enrollment according to the order indicating their choice of program in 2019
 - 1.5. Foreign language test mean scores of ELT students at state, private, and universities out of Turkey (2016-2019)
2. The profile of the ELT programs
 - 2.1. Academic staff of the ELT programs between 2016 and 2019
 - 2.2. The most and least preferred ELT programs (universities) in 2019
 - 2.3. Performance of the ELT programs in terms of exchange programs between 2016 and 2018
 - 2.4. The number of students studying in the ELT programs at the university located in his/her hometown and region between 2016 and 2019.

Although the statistics are readily available for these issues on YÖK Atlas, they are only available for each program and year separately in the form of numbers and percentages. Therefore, in the analysis of the existing data on YÖK Atlas platform, first, the statistics for 137 programs and four years were listed and combined separately for each issue. Second, statistical analyses were conducted to find out percentages and mean scores. Lastly, they were further grouped under three categories to indicate the differences among state, private, and the universities located out of Turkey. It was only educational backgrounds of the ELT students enrolled in 2019 that did not require any statistical calculations, listing, or grouping. It is readily available on YÖK Atlas.

Admission to ELT Programs and Training of ELT Students in Turkey

Council of Higher Education (CoHE) is in charge of students' placement in higher education institutions in Turkey. Several examinations are regulated by Measuring, Selection, and Placement Center (MSPC). Students are required to graduate from a high school and receive a sufficient score from Higher Education Institution Examination administered all around Turkey simultaneously. Students who would like to enroll in an ELT program in Turkey are supposed to take two examinations called BPT (Basic Proficiency Test) and FLT (Foreign Language Test). The distribution of the questions in these tests is illustrated below.

The weights of the tests in BPT are 33% for Turkish, 17% for History, Geography, Philosophy, and Culture of religion and knowledge of ethics, 17% for Physics, Chemistry, and Biology, and 33% for Mathematics. All questions are in multiple-choice form. Foreign Language Test (FLT) also includes multiple-choice questions involving grammar, translation, reading, and vocabulary-related items. Students' overall foreign language score to be enrolled in an ELT program involves 60% for FLT and 40% for BPT. In addition, students' weighted high school grade point is added to this score.

Students have 24 options to choose a program at a university after receiving the overall foreign language score. ELT programs

are offered at 52 different state universities including 57 programs totally (two of them are in Cyprus campus, and three of them are joint programs administered in Turkey and abroad), 44 programs offered at 13 different private universities in Turkey, 28 programs at nine different universities in Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, three programs at one university in Skopje (North Macedonia), three programs at one university in Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and one program at one university in Baku (Azerbaijan). Private universities in Turkey and the universities out of Turkey offer some scholarships in their programs. Each scholarship option is presented as a different program in YÖK Atlas.

The students who are enrolled in one of these ELT programs study at the faculty of education for a period of four years. Prior to the ELT program, all students are required to take a proficiency examination at the beginning of the first year. The students whose scores are below the required ones fail and have to take a one-year English preparatory class. The maximum duration for students to pass the preparatory class is two years.

During four-year ELT training, students receive content knowledge-based (48%), pedagogical knowledge-based (34%), and general culture-based (18%) classes (Öztürk & Aydın, 2018). Students have the opportunity to have school practice in the last year of the program for two semesters. The program to be followed in ELT programs all around Turkey is standardized and regulated by CoHE.

In the language learning process, teacher quality is one of the most profound factors playing a role in students' success, motivation, and beliefs in their teachers (Kurbanoğlu, 2004). In order to ensure high quality in foreign language teacher education, besides the content of the program, many other factors play significant roles, such as admission requirements, the quality of academic staff, students' satisfaction, and whether students meet their needs and expectations at that faculty and in the city university is located. The following section will be divided into two to draw a clear picture of ELT students and ELT programs offered in the Turkish higher education system.

Table 1: Basic Proficiency Test and Foreign Language Test

Test / timing	Tests	Number of Questions
BPT (Basic Proficiency Test) 135 minutes	Turkish	40
	History	5
	Geography	5
	Philosophy	5
	Culture of religion and knowledge of ethics	5
	Mathematics	40
	Physics	7
	Chemistry	7
	Biology	6
FLT (Foreign Language Test) 120 minutes	Foreign Language Test	80

THE PROFILE of ELT STUDENTS in TURKEY

Turkey has a huge student population in higher education institutions, with a total of 4,420,699 students studying for a bachelor's degree, and 2,829,430 students studying for an associate degree for two years enrolled in 129 state, 73 private, and 5 foundation vocational high schools (YÖK, 2019). Recently ELT program has also witnessed a rapid massification with the increased number of universities. The gender distribution of ELT students over the past four years across the state, private universities, and universities located out of Turkey is provided in Table 2 below.

The vast majority of ELT students have always been females in the last four years at state, private, and universities located out of Turkey. Moreover, the steady increase in the number of both female and male students during this period has also been remarkable. Despite a slight decrease in the percentage of female ELT students at state universities over the four years, the percentage of those studying at private universities remained stable, and that of female students studying at universities out of Turkey has shown a slight increase. In addition, the dominance of female learners is more immediately apparent at private universities compared to state universities and the ones located out of Turkey.

Supporting the findings related to the dominance of female ELT students, the teaching profession has always been and remained highly gendered, and the question why entering this profession as a career choice is so gender-based remains a highly debated issue in the literature on gender and education (Tašner, Mihelič, & Čeplak, 2017). Firstly, the choice of female students may be related to their superiority in verbal skills compared to males (Oxford, 2002). Another perspective is that caring as one of the basic characteristics of women (Tašner et

al., 2017) and 'motherhood imagery' (Acker, 1995) structure their ideas and make teaching appropriate for them. Though not specific to English language teachers, the dominance of female teachers can also be seen in the statistics of Turkey provided by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE, 2019), indicating 94% female share in pre-school education, and 64% of total teachers as female in primary schools. Women's supremacy in numbers is also valid in secondary schools with 58% (MoNE, 2019). However, considering the high number of female teachers in Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries with average 83% in primary schools and 69% in lower secondary schools (OECD, 2019) and the findings of this study, it can be deduced that the dominance of female teachers in Turkey may be stronger in a few years.

Following gender-based discussion, the second aspect indicating the profile of the ELT students is their educational background. The statistics on YÖK Atlas in this respect are limited to the last year (2019).

The majority of the ELT students who were placed in these programs in 2019 were newly graduates of a high school who had not taken university examination before 2019. It is interesting that almost 12% of the students were not pleased with their previous programs and decided to move to an ELT program. It is also very common for students in Turkey to have a second attempt to enroll in the program they desire after the failure in university examination for the first time, which makes 21.4% of the ELT students enrolled in 2019.

Since not all the students are able to enroll in the programs they wish for, it is also significant to investigate the alternative programs preferred by the students studying in ELT programs during the university and program selection procedure. Table

Table 2: Gender Distribution of ELT Students at State, Private, and Universities Out of Turkey (2016-2019)

Years	State Universities				Private Universities				Universities Out of Turkey			
	Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
2019	2280	61.3	1439	38.6	532	70	228	30	180	62.9	119	37.1
2018	2167	60.8	1398	39.2	531	69.5	232	30.5	132	57.6	97	42.4
2017	1958	63.7	1112	36.3	425	69.8	184	30.2	149	61.8	92	38.2
2016	1774	64.3	983	35.7	351	69.2	156	30.8	112	59.9	75	40.1

Table 3: Educational Background of the ELT Students Studying in Turkey (2019)

Educational Background	<i>f</i>	%
New high school graduate who took university examination for the first time	3.116	65.6
High school graduate who had never been to university before	1.014	21.4
The student who took the exam while he was a student at another university	323	6.8
The student who graduated from a university before	237	5
Other	58	1.2
Total	4.748	100

4 below shows the most preferred programs by ELT students in 2019.

First of all, it should be stated that 79.5% of the total preferences were for ELT programs. The programs on language and culture (e.g. English, American, French) were also popular among the ELT students. Translation and linguistic programs were other favored programs. Additionally, there are 211 other programs chosen by the ELT students who were not listed on this list.

The popularity of the programs listed above as an alternative program to ELT can be attributed to the fact that students of these programs, except for associate degree holders and the students studying other languages and tourism, have the opportunity to receive a pedagogical formation training certificate to be an English language teacher candidate as the graduates of ELT program.

Another issue to be covered in terms of ELT students' profile is the students' order of preference, which indicates how willing they are to enroll in that specific program. Each student has 24 different preferences at the university preference stage. It is inevitable that not all the students are able to enroll in the first program they prefer due to the system which follows success rating. The statistics showed that only 4.8% of the ELT students could enroll in the programs they preferred as the first program in 2019. Moreover, the proportion of students who were placed in one of the top 5 program choices in 2019 was only 21.4%. It is also possible for a student to enroll in the program that was listed as the last program in the list. The proportion of students in this situation was 1.7% in 2019.

The last but maybe the most important statistics regarding the profile of the ELT students are the ones showing their success

prior to admission. As previously put forward, students have to take BPT and FLT, and a combination of the scores is calculated for the admission of ELT programs. Since FLT is the only indicator of English proficiency of the students in this case, their overall performance in this test over the past four years can give us insights into how proficient the students were before entering ELT programs. Table 5 below provides two categories for each year, 0.12 and 0.18. All students' weighted high school grade point average (WHGPA) is multiplied with 0.12 in Turkey. However, when teaching high school graduates apply for teaching majors, they receive extra points by multiplying their WHGPA by an additional coefficient of 0.06, which makes 0.18 in total. However, this is only valid for the graduates till 2012.

Firstly, it should be noted that FLT consists of 80 multiple choice questions. The statistics show that despite slight decrease in the mean scores of the ELT students receiving standard WHGPA at state and private universities in 2017, there has been a remarkable increase in the last two years. The steady increase in the number of students' mean scores with standard WHGPA in FLT can also be seen in the students studying at the universities located out of Turkey except for 2019. There was only one student enrolled in 2018 with extra WHGPA for private universities and the ones out of Turkey each, which might be the reason for high scores for them.

When the FLT mean scores of students studying at state, private, and the universities situated out of Turkey are compared, it becomes apparent that there is a considerable difference among one another. The students' mean scores at state universities are almost twice that of students studying at universities located out of Turkey. Although the scores of private university ELT students seem closer to those of state

Table 4: Alternative Programs Preferred by the ELT Students (2019)

Program	Number of Preferences	Preference Rate (%)
English Language and Literature	4.280	7.4
Translation and Interpretation (Faculty)	2.134	3.7
American Culture and Literature	365	0.6
Translation and Interpreting	273	0.5
Associate Degree (not specified)	208	0.4
Tourism Guidance (Faculty)	199	0.3
German Language Teaching	160	0.3
Linguistics	138	0.2
French Language and Literature	88	0.2
English Linguistics	129	0.2

Table 5: FLT Mean Scores of ELT Students At State, Private, and Universities Out of Turkey (2016-2019)

University	2019		2018		2017		2016	
	0.12	0.18	0.12	0.18	0.12	0.18	0.12	0.18
State	66.5	64.7	57.6	60	56.9	52.5	60.5	57.3
Private	55.2	No student	52.7	62.5	47.9	41	50.5	51
Out of Turkey	35	No student	35.54	73.8	30.9	29.6	29.4	34.5

university students, the average mean score of four years is 51.5 and 48.2 for the students with standard and extra WHGPA, respectively, which means they could only answer 61.8% of 80 questions in FLT.

Considering these students as a whole and potential future ELT candidates of Turkey, low English proficiency has already been criticized by the researchers (Çetinavcı & Yavuz, 2010; Köksal & Ulum, 2019). Moreover, scholars do not shy away from relating this to low admission requirements of ELT programs and inappropriate and inefficient system followed for measuring English proficiency (Köksal & Ulum, 2019; Öztürk & Aydın, 2018).

THE PROFILE of ELT PROGRAMS in TURKEY

As to training future English language teachers, the ELT program plays a significant role in determining the quality of language education in Turkey and, beyond doubt, the place of Turkey in future English proficiency indices. As all teacher education programs, the ELT program in Turkey administered centrally by CoHE is also criticized on several aspects (Öztürk & Aydın, 2018). However, one of the ways to overcome the existing problems is to understand the organizational structure of these programs. Therefore, following statistics about the ELT programs in Turkey at state, private, and the universities located out of Turkey may allow us to gain insights about these programs and to find some causal links.

Considering the impact of academics on success of the future teachers, the initial step is to provide the number of academics teaching in ELT programs in Turkey. The statistics available on YÖK Atlas provided below give the number of professors, associate professors, and assistant professors at state and private universities in Turkey between the years of 2016 and 2019. It should also be stated that some classes in ELT programs like the elective ones are also taught by academic staff of the related programs.

The findings indicate a dramatic increase in the number of professors and assistant professors at state universities in 2018. The number stayed stable in 2018 and 2019 after this increase, yet the percentage of professors decreased due to the increased number of total academics. The decrease

in the number of associate professors in 2018 compared to the previous year clarifies the increase in the number of professors in the same year. On the other hand, the number of professors and assistant professors steadily increased at private universities between 2016 and 2019.

The number of assistant professors steadily increased at state universities as well. Moreover, assistant professors have always been the dominant position at both state and private universities in terms of numbers. The dominance of this position is more apparent at private universities than state ones. While the state universities with the highest number of professors are Anadolu, Çukurova, and Gazi universities with 5 professors each (2019), they are İstanbul Sabahattin Zaim, Maltepe, and Yeditepe universities with 2 professors each for private universities (2019). Çukurova University also has 6 associate professors, and Middle East Technical University takes the lead in having the highest number of assistant professors (10) in 2019.

The link between academic staff and students' success has been reported in the literature (Angeleski, Nikoloski, & Rocheska, 2019). Taking this fact into consideration, though it is not the only criteria, a higher number of academic staff may produce better future teachers. However, since students' attitudes also play a significant role in this process, the statistics showing students' ideas concerning 'academic support and care' are partly in line with the study of Karadağ and Yücel (2019) who ranked universities in terms of students' satisfaction regarding 'academic support and care' in a comprehensive study. In their study, though not purely ELT-based, Anadolu University, which has the highest number of professors in ELT programs, occupied the 104th position among 188 universities listed. However, some universities with a high number of academic staff in ELT programs ranked higher, such as Middle East Technical University as the 13th, Gazi University as the 20th, and Maltepe University as the 21st position (Karadağ & Yücel, 2019).

As previously mentioned, the ELT program is offered in 136 different programs at state and private universities in Turkey, and the universities out of Turkey listed in CoHE. Each university and program has a quota. After learning their overall foreign language score from university examination, students learn

Table 6: The academic staff of ELT programs at state and private universities in Turkey (2016-2019)

University	Title	2019		2018		2017		2016	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
State	Professor	44	15.4	44	16.2	25	10.8	27	12.1
	Associate professor	44	15.4	44	16.2	54	23.5	50	22.3
	Assistant professor	198	69.2	183	67.5	151	65.6	147	65.6
	Total	286	100	271	100	230	100	224	100
Private	Professor	10	16.1	9	15.2	7	14	6	12.2
	Associate professor	4	6.4	4	6.8	1	2	3	6.1
	Assistant professor	48	77.4	46	78	42	84	40	81.7
	Total	62	100	59	100	50	100	49	100

the results indicating which preferred university and program they can enroll in. Despite the abundance of programs and universities offering ELT programs, their preference statistics are not much known. Below in Table 7 are the statistics showing the most and least preferred five ELT programs, including the number of preferences in 2019 in three categories: state universities, private universities, and universities located out of Turkey.

Firstly, the number of preferences does not indicate the success of these programs. They just represent the students' preferences. The clearest difference can be seen in the gap among the most preferred universities at state and private university categories. The difference between the first and the fifth most preferred state universities is almost 2000, which is below 800 in the least preferred universities at state universities. It is also interesting that both the most preferred and the least preferred universities in the category of state universities are located in the same geographical region of Turkey, the Black Sea Region. Considering private universities, İstanbul Kültür University is by far the most preferred university. The gap among the other most preferred private universities is not markedly different, which is almost the same for the least preferred category. The location of the universities situated out of Turkey plays a significant role in determining the preferences of the students since the ones located further to Turkey, such as the ones in Azerbaijan, North Macedonia,

and Bosnia and Herzegovina were not preferred as popularly as the ones located in Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Despite the lack of research investigating the factors that have an impact on ELT students' choice of university, it is clear that future expectations for a career are the first factor among all the students (Ilgan, Ataman, Uğurlu, & Yurdunkulu, 2018). However, facilities of universities, such as campus and the popularity of training at the university, are among the other determining factors (Ilgan et al., 2018).

One of the key factors that may have a major impact on students' preferences of universities and programs is the availability of exchange programs. Although there exist some special bilateral agreements between some universities, there are basically three exchange programs actively participated in Turkey called Erasmus+, Farabi, and Mevlana exchange programs. Erasmus+ gives students the opportunity to study in another European university for a certain period of time. Farabi is a more national exchange program which allows students to continue their education at another university in Turkey for one or two semesters. Mevlana exchange program works with the same conditions as Erasmus+, however, there is no region or country limitation in this program. All three exchange programs are valid for students and academic staff. Table 8 indicates the number of incoming and outgoing students in these three exchange programs. The statistics are available on YÖK Atlas only for state and private universities.

Table 7: The Most and Least Preferred Five ELT Programs at the State, Private, and Universities Out of Turkey in 2019

University	Most Preferred		Least Preferred	
	University	f	University	f
State	1. Sinop	5304	1. Trabzon	865
	2. Bartın	5115	2. Dicle	1158
	3. Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam	4540	3. İstanbul Medeniyet	1385
	4. Anadolu	3626	4. İstanbul -Cerrahpaşa	1483
	5. Uludağ	3338	5. Çukurova	1661
Private	1. İstanbul Kültür	1720	1. İstanbul Okan	324
	2. MEF	1000	2. İstanbul Sabahattin Zaim	525
	3. Biruni	912	3. Hasan Kalyoncu	540
	4. Yeditepe	875	4. Ufuk	576
	5. Başkent	835	5. İstanbul Aydın	673
Out of Turkey	1. Girne American (Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus)	446	1. Azerbaijan University of Languages (Azerbaijan)	5
	2. European University of Lefke (Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus)	409	2. International Balkan (Skopje, North Macedonia)	20
	3. Cyprus International (Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus)	365	3. International University of Sarajevo (Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina)	35
	4. Eastern Mediterranean (Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus)	306	4. Ada Kent (Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus)	120
	5. Near East (Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus)	291	5. Cyprus University of Social Sciences (Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus)	133

Table 8: The Performance of ELT Programs in Terms of Exchange Programs (2016-2018)

Exchange program	State Universities					
	Erasmus+		Farabi		Mevlana	
Years	Incoming students	Outgoing students	Incoming students	Outgoing students	Incoming students	Outgoing students
2018	31	139	53	33	11	2
2017	16	73	46	11	6	2
2016	20	84	55	13	12	1
Exchange program	Private Universities					
	Erasmus+		Farabi		Mevlana	
Years	Incoming students	Outgoing students	Incoming students	Outgoing students	Incoming students	Outgoing students
2018	3	9	0	0	0	0
2017	0	8	0	0	0	0
2016	1	1	0	0	0	0

The statistics show that there was a dramatic increase in the number of incoming and outgoing students in Erasmus+ program in 2018. Despite a decrease at state universities, the number of outgoing Erasmus+ students at private universities markedly increased in 2017. It is also interesting that the number of outgoing students has always surpassed the number of incoming students in Erasmus+ except for 2016 at private universities. Contrary to this, the number of incoming students in Farabi and Mevlana programs has always been higher at state universities. Moreover, students at private universities have not participated in these two exchange programs.

Additionally, the statistics show that the universities with the highest number of incoming Erasmus+ students are Anadolu University with 6 students in 2018, Ondokuz Mayıs University with 4 students in 2017, and Akdeniz University with 4 students in 2016. Apart from these leading universities, Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Gazi University, Mersin University, and Boğaziçi University have been among the top universities in welcoming Erasmus+ students.

Anadolu University keeps the highest position in outgoing Erasmus+ students as well, with 32 students in 2018, and 35 students in 2017 and 2016. Additionally, Uludağ University, Ondokuz Mayıs University, Middle East Technical University, Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal University, Hacettepe University are the other institutions that have been active in sending students to European universities for some periods.

In Farabi exchange program, while Atatürk University took the lead with 12 outgoing students, it was Ondokuz Mayıs University, which received the highest number of incoming students with six students in 2018. Kocaeli University, Anadolu University, and Necmettin Erbakan University were also among the universities with the highest number of outgoing students in Farabi exchange program.

Although Mevlana exchange program was not as popular as the other two programs, there were especially incoming

students from other countries. Ondokuz Mayıs University has always been the top university in terms of welcoming the highest number of incoming students for the past three years in this program with five students each year. Atatürk University and Akdeniz University were also visited by Mevlana exchange program students more than other universities in these years.

Research claims that the availability of exchange programs is a major factor determining the choice of university (Manoku, 2015; Tavares, Justino, & Amaral, 2008). A deeper investigation shows that while the incoming and outgoing students value the atmosphere of the city and country the most, it is the social life that helps outgoing Turkish students determine the country in exchange programs, whereas incoming exchange students' priority is university facilities (Özberk, Öztürk Boztunç, Fındık Yılmaz, & Kaptı, 2017). Considering all these factors, it may be deduced that exchange programs may play a role in ELT students' university selection.

The last issue regarding the profile of the ELT programs in Turkey is about how geographical distance or proximity affects students' preferences. As Turkey is a large country having seven radically different geographical regions, the distance between the cities may increase the likelihood of preferring studying in hometown or in a closer city. The statistics available for the past four years give us the information about the number of male and female students studying in ELT programs at the university located in his/her hometown at state and private universities in Turkey (Table 9). It is also possible to deduce from the statistics provided on YÖK Atlas to specify the number of ELT students studying at the university located in the same geographical region where his/her hometown is situated (Table 10).

The crucial finding in terms of the difference between the genders shows that the number of female ELT students studied at the universities located in their hometown has always been higher in the last four years at private universities, whereas the ratio of male ELT students has surpassed that of

Table 9: The Number of Male and Female Students Studying in ELT Programs at State and Private University Located In His/Her Hometown in Turkey (2016-2019)

Year	University	City	Female		Male	
			f	%	f	%
2019	State	Same city	471	17	309	18.6
	State	Different city	1792	64.8	1124	67.6
	Private	Same city	330	11.9	142	8.5
	Private	Different city	172	6.2	86	5.1
2018	State	Same city	529	19	361	22.1
	State	Different city	1642	61.4	1031	63.3
	Private	Same city	315	11.7	151	9.2
	Private	Different city	185	6.9	85	5.2
2017	State	Same city	474	19.9	268	20.7
	State	Different city	1481	62.2	840	65
	Private	Same city	266	11.1	123	9.5
	Private	Different city	159	6.6	61	4.7
2016	State	Same city	409	19.3	267	23.5
	State	Different city	1357	64.1	709	62.6
	Private	Same city	241	11.3	101	8.9
	Private	Different city	110	5.1	55	4.8

Table 10: The Number of Students Studying in ELT Programs at the University Located in the Same Geographical Region as His/Her Hometown at State and Private Universities in Turkey (2016-2019)

Year	State Universities					Private Universities				
	Total	Same Region		Different Region		Total	Same Region		Different Region	
	f	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f
2019	3714	1687	45.4	2027	54.6	730	553	75.7	177	24.3
2018	3542	1711	48.3	1831	51.7	731	550	75.2	181	28.8
2017	3070	1467	47.7	1603	52.3	610	464	76.0	146	24
2016	2767	1313	47.4	1454	54.6	507	385	75.9	122	24.1

female students in this category in the last four years at state universities. Another finding illustrates the gradual decrease in the number of female ELT students studying at their hometown state universities since 2017. Although there is no gradual decrease like in females, the decrease in the number of male ELT students studying at their hometown state universities can also be observed in 2019.

Ignoring the gender gap and focusing on general findings, it is obvious that there have always been more ELT students studying at universities out of their hometown. The percentage of the students studying at their hometown universities remains mostly below 30%.

The findings concerning whether ELT students study at universities in the geographical region where their hometowns are located show that while ELT students studying at private universities have preferred universities that are located in the same geographical region as their hometowns, it has been just the opposite for the ELT students studying at state universities

for the past four years. Despite the steady increase in the number of students preferring studying in closer cities at state universities until 2018, there was a decrease in the last year in this number.

As for geographical proximity or distance as a factor of university and program choice, the full picture would remain incomplete if the sudden increase in the number of universities and programs in Turkey is not mentioned. While the number of universities was 73 in 2004 (Tekneci, 2016), this number reached 207 by 2019 in Turkey. There have been 21 new universities founded just in the last two years (YÖK, 2019). This expansion sounds rational considering the target of expanding higher education as one of the primary targets of Turkish government for almost thirty years (Çetinsaya, 2014). However, this rapid increase has created several problems, such as lack of research, quality of the graduates, and its contribution to the economy recently (Tekneci, 2016). ELT programs have also experienced this rapid expansion, yet apparently, this has not brought much success.

In general terms, close proximity to home is considered as a factor for choosing a university (Holdsworth & Nind, 2006; Shanka, Quintal, & Taylor, 2006). Although the findings of some studies indicated that homesickness is more intense for female learners (Stroebe, van Vliet, Hewstone, & Willis, 2002), the share of female ELT students studying at their hometown state universities was lower compared to male ones in this study. However, some researchers have found out no relationship between gender and homesickness (Fisher & Hood, 1987).

Another study (Hacıfazlıoğlu & Özdemir, 2010) conducted in the context of Turkish private university students investigating the reasons of choosing these universities found that city where the university is located and the location of the university there made up 70% of the total reasons. It is also obvious that the number of ELT students studying at private universities located in their hometown or the universities situated in the same geographical region as their hometown has always been higher in the last four years which supports the findings of the study of Hacıfazlıoğlu and Özdemir (2010). Despite the lack of statistics regarding the relationship between the geographical distance of university to home and the success of the students, the literature claims a negative correlation between one another, the negative impact being stronger on male learners (Vieira, Vieira, & Raposo, 2017).

As a final remark, ELT students' preferences may be directly related to the rapid expansion of the number of universities and ELT programs all around Turkey. The students who have the opportunity of studying at a university in his/her hometown possibly would like to study there considering the cost, which is also a major factor (Vieira et al., 2017).

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the general profile of the ELT students and ELT programs running at state and private universities and the universities located out of Turkey which is in the list of CoHE based on the statistics provided on YÖK Atlas. Regarding the profile of the ELT students, it has been found that there have always been more female students in these programs in three categories of universities in the last four years. The majority of the ELT students enrolled in 2019 were new graduates of high school and took the university examination for the first time. For these students, the program called English Language and Literature was the second most preferred program following ELT. The possibility of enrolling in the first program in their preference list was below 5%. Considering the last four years, the ELT students' English proficiency measured by FLT was low, especially for the ones studying at private universities and the ones out of Turkey.

The findings regarding the profile of the ELT programs, in general, indicated the dominance of assistant professors in these programs as the highest number of academic staff. Additionally, outgoing Erasmus+ students have always outnumbered incoming students in the past four years in ELT programs. Moreover, ELT programs at state universities have been more active in Erasmus+ program. On the other hand, the exchange program called Mevlana was not commonly

preferred by ELT students. In terms of students' preferences, ELT students studying at private universities, especially female students, paid more attention to geographical proximity to hometown, whereas the ratio was higher for male students at state universities.

Taking the findings into consideration, three fundamental suggestions may be listed for the ELT programs in Turkey. Firstly, the number of highly qualified academic staff should be increased since there are some ELT programs in which no professors or associate professors are currently employed. This increase may also help the current academic staff by decreasing the workload. Secondly, considering the low number of incoming and outgoing students in exchange programs, all ELT programs should be encouraged to be involved in more exchange programs, which would broaden the students' horizons. Necessary steps should be taken by CoHE, education faculties, and the academic staff to welcome more incoming students and academic staff in exchange programs. The last and one of the most significant suggestions for ELT programs is about admission requirements. The current admission requirements' inefficacy has been criticized in several studies (Köksal & Ulum, 2018; Öztürk & Aydın, 2018). FLT should be replaced with a test measuring all language skills as a first step. Measuring students' attitude and willingness to become a teacher through some interviews may work in choosing the best candidates for this program.

It should be noted that the statistics provided in this study are limited with and based on the numbers provided on the website <https://yokatlas.yok.gov.tr/>. Further researchers may delve into details questioning the reasons for choosing specific ELT programs at the state, private universities, and also universities out of Turkey. In terms of geographical proximity, gender-based homesickness and its potential impact on the success of ELT students may be investigated in further research. Additionally, gender-based comparison of the reasons for choosing to teach English language as the profession can be examined. Furthermore, future research may potentially find a relationship between students' satisfaction with the number of academic staff and their involvement and students' success or willingness to teach. Finally, the reasons why some universities have been preferred more than the others may be elaborated in further research.

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